THE
DANIEL AND EMILY OLIVER ORPHANAGES

RAS-EL-METN, SYRIA

The
Daniel and Emily Oliver
Orphanages

RAS-EL-METN, SYRIA

Early History

THE relief work began in this centre of the Lebanon in the early spring of 1915, but to get the necessary background we shall say something of the long years of missionary labour in the Lebanon by Daniel and Emily Oliver before the war. Daniel Oliver left his home in Scotland in 1889 and, after some months in Morocco, arrived in Syria in the spring of 1890. Emily Oliver reached Syria in the autumn of 1890 with her father, Alfred Wright, who was on his way a second time to Australia with a Minute from London Yearly Meeting to visit Friends in that Continent and New Zealand. Daniel and Emily Oliver were married in 1895 and began their united life and work, in Ras-el-Metn and the district, in the autumn of that year. Their work in pre-war years was principally in maintaining primary schools for the boys and girls in this district, as well as the holding of Meetings for Worship, classes for young men and women, mothers' meetings, medical clinics, temperance work and what is always needed—peace work and the settlement of disputes of every kind arising among the people. Thousands of boys and girls have passed through our schools in Ras-el-Metn and in the villages around. Before the war we had eight schools, in different centres, under our care and supervision. While our work was never of a proselyting type, we have always endeavored to pay particular attention to the moral training of the young, and the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its principles were specially impressed on the children under our care. In looking back over these long years, we can see tremendous progress in public opinion in this country and in the whole outlook of the people. Christian education has done more than anything else to raise the status of women in the East and now the education of girls is becoming almost as important in the minds of the people as that of boys. Also, in marriage and the choice of husbands, girls in Syria to-day, with few exceptions, are allowed to follow their own inclinations and can refuse the men they do not want to marry. Our best



The Orphanage



Village of Ras-el-Metn

pupils in the primary schools were sent on to the Friends' High Schools in Brummana, through which hundreds of boys and girls have passed and are to-day occupying important positions as teachers, nurses, merchants and Government officials in this country and in Palestine, Egypt and the Sudan.

World War Period

WHEN the World War broke out in 1914 we were at home in America, and we hurried back from there to our post, reaching Beyrouth in October, 1914, to find that nearly all the missionaries, on the advice of their Consuls, had left Syria when the entry of Turkey into the war was imminent. The very day we landed at Beyrouth, Turkey had declared the "capitulations" were at an end, and people were afraid of a massacre of the Christians, but this fear was something like that of the man who suffered great troubles throughout his life, most of which had never happened! We reached Ras-el-Metn the following day and got such an overwhelming reception that everything was forgotten in the fact that we were among our beloved people again. Alas, the clouds were thickening and darkening on the horizon, and by the end of the month all the foreign Consuls had left Syria; Turkey had declared war and we had made our decision to "stick the thing out" and go through to the end. In those early weeks no one had any idea how far away the end was and how much water would flow under the bridges before we saw that end. As we saw the Turkish troops occupying the hills around us, we knew that we were entering on a phase of things that we had never known before.

The first official intimation I received from the Turkish Army was an order signed by the Commander of the Fourth Army—"All foreigners were to remain in their places, and anyone who moved from his place until further orders, would instantly be shot." I signed a paper acknowledging receipt of the order and then informed the soldier I was going to take my wife and son to Beyrouth in the morning. He said "You had better not attempt it." We hurriedly packed—I sent to Hamana in the night, got a carriage and a pair of fast horses and before daylight we were flying rapidly to Brummana. No attempt was made to intercept us, although I expected we would have been arrested, but evidently a bold front had made



The Daniel and Emily Oliver Family

the soldiers hesitate and we won the day. My wife and son reached Beyrouth safely and I returned to Ras-el-Metn. I did not know then, what I did know a few days later, that they were no safer in Beyrouth than in Lebanon—but that is a long story and not for to-day.

Early in December I was taken a prisoner with others to Damascus. There I had an interview with the Turkish Commander in Chief, when I had the opportunity of explaining to him what my work had been, why I had remained in the country and that, as a Quaker, I could have no connection with war, and I begged him to trust me and allow me to continue my work in the Lebanon. It would take too much time and space to go into my relation with the Commander of the Turkish army—suffice it to say that he was convinced that I was a man who could be trusted, and that I received his friendship and never lost it, even when I was accused of spying in 1917 in the interests of the French and the British and again imprisoned under a military guard night and day, and it was expected that I was going to be hanged, yet the friendship and confidence of the Turkish Commander never failed and I undoubtedly owe my life to him, and I would like here to state the principle which I so profoundly believe in, that if we meet all situations with love and trust, friendship and sincerity, these will carry us over most difficulties in life and enable us to triumph. Djemal Pasha permitted me to return to the Lebanon to live in Ras-el-Metn and to go freely through the country wherever I wished, and the personal passport which he gave me was such that on the few occasions when I was questioned and produced my credentials, soldiers and officers bowed before me and I passed on.

Emily Oliver and our son, Kenneth, left Beyrouth on New Year's Day, 1915, on the last Italian boat that touched on the Syrian coast for four years. It was their only and last chance of getting away and in view of all that followed I am thankful they did get out of the country before every avenue was finally closed. The occasion of their departure was an urgent telegram from our sister, who was dangerously ill in Italy. What seemed a misfortune at that time, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Emily Oliver remained there for five months and then proceeded to America. She and Kenneth S. Oliver had just gotten out of the country before Italy declared war on Ger-



Teachers and Helpers at Ras-el-Metn

many and Austria. However, they reached the United States safely and there Emily Oliver was able to do a great deal in helping to collect and forward contributions for the purchase of wheat to help to feed the starving in Syria.

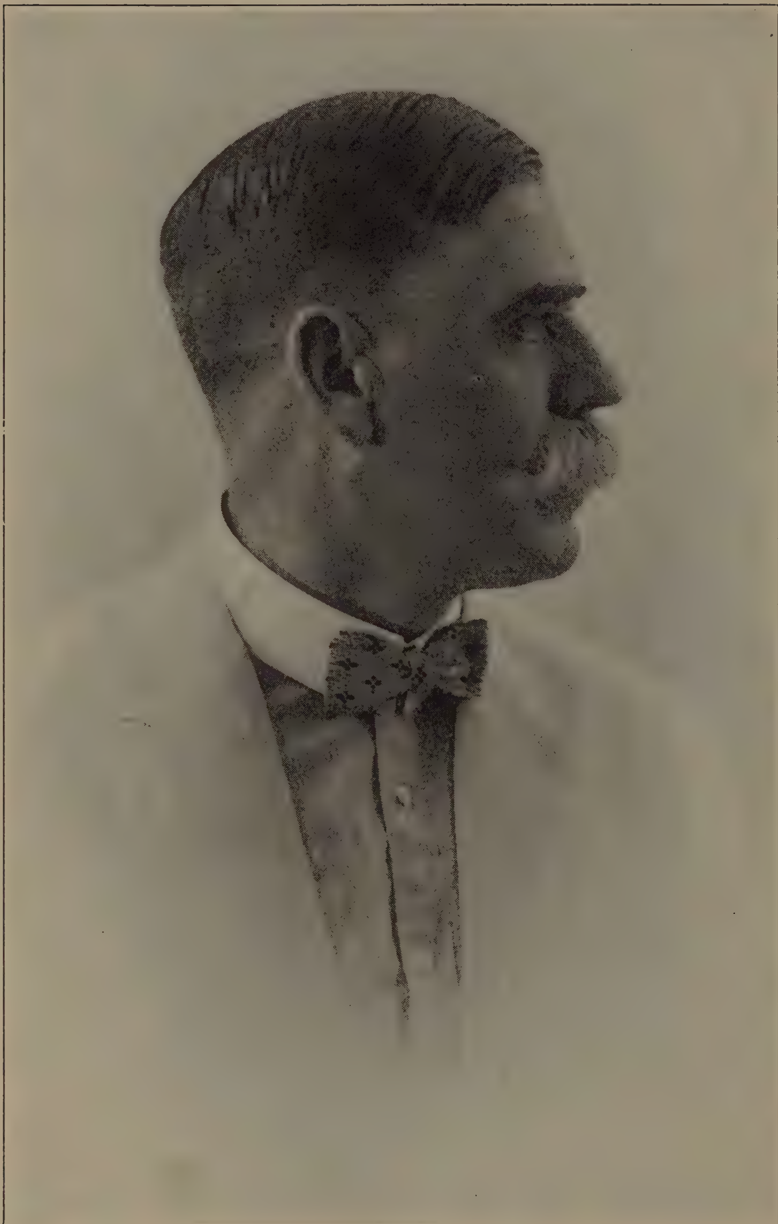
In the spring of 1915, our real difficulties began by the appearance of locusts in such numbers as had not been seen here in the memory of living man. They appeared one afternoon in clouds, darkening the sun and after flying around for some time they gradually settled and covered the ground so thickly that one could not tread anywhere without crushing them. One could literally hear the noise of their eating the leaves of the mulberry trees, indeed, every green thing; and then we began to realize that we might be faced with famine; for on the west of us the Mediterranean Sea was so closely patrolled by British and French gunboats that nothing could enter the country that way; and on the East of us the Turkish army, marching south to fight the British in Egypt, cut us off from the great wheat producing country of the Hauran east of Damascus. Hauran wheat was commandeered to feed the army, while we in the Lebanon were allowed to use the wheat which grew in the Bakaa, as the plain is called which separates the Lebanon from the Anti-Lebanon mountains; but as this had all been eaten up by locusts, we had a desolate country all around us with practically no crops to supply our needs. Also, all the animals, such as mules, camels, donkeys and horses, were commandeered for the use of the army; the trains were only used for military purposes for the Turks had no coal, but were cutting down trees and trying to run the trains with green wood, so the train service was not enough for military necessities, not to speak of transport for the civil population. The result was that supplies in a few months became exhausted and then hunger set in and we were faced with real starvation. In addition to that, for trouble rarely comes single handed, the typhus, which was so bad in the Serbian army, was brought down from Constantinople by Turkish soldiers and spread very rapidly through the country and as the people got weaker and weaker through the want of food, naturally every other disease became rampant, but specially pernicious malaria, typhoid, etc. And so we had people dying by hundreds and thousands all over the countryside. The memory of these horrible sights is burnt upon my brain cells never to be forgotten. In course of time one got in a measure hardened, and death was so com-

mon, we met it everywhere almost every hour of the day, that we ceased to have any fear of that monster—indeed, there were times when we thought it was a kind friend in relieving people from agonies and suffering which no words can ever describe. As a lover of children, I never could get accustomed or hardened to seeing them suffer and die from starvation and so every effort was put forth to rescue and save as many as possible of the children and the women. For men there was no possibility of help at all—they had simply to die. The American Red Cross came early to the rescue and did a noble work and would have done more but for the difficulties put into their way by Turkey after America declared war on Germany, but even then money flowed into the country from America, and Friends sent constantly contributions through my wife to the American Press in Beyrouth. With that money we were able to get some of our Druse muleteers, with the lame donkeys and mules they were able to succeed in keeping and hiding, to venture through the Turkish lines during the darkness of night and smuggle back wheat from the Hauran with which we fed hundreds of women and children daily. A small loaf of bread was given to each individual and that was all they had to keep them alive for twenty-four hours. They dug up roots, they ate anything they could find on the roads or in the fields, but there was little nourishment in these things and people just died. Probably a fourth, if not more, of the population of Syria was wiped out by hunger, starvation and pestilence. Year by year as the war went on hope seemed to die in our hearts and we gave ourselves up for lost, but the one thing that kept one going and hoping against hope during these black and terrible years, was the joy and satisfaction of making things a little easier for a certain number of women and children and helping at least some to continue to believe in a God of love and kindness. One could fill books with the experiences of these years, but suffice it to say that these events gave a new bent to our work in the Lebanon, and led me to this conclusion that it was God's will for us to give the remaining years of our lives to the cause of the orphans and to put the very best that we have and can command at the disposal of these war victims.

Starting of the Orphanages; Our Aims and Methods

EARLY in the war we hired rooms where these lost-wandering children, whose parents had died, were lodged and fed;—that was the beginning of our orphanage. Each year since then we have been improving the conditions. It has ceased long ago to be merely palliative and giving out doles; our work now amongst the orphan boys and girls is really constructive and while we are clothing and feeding them, we are also giving them a first class High School education with the definite purpose in view of making through them a contribution to the reconstruction of Syria and the Near East.

We have in the orphanage, and the school, children from all the different sects in the country, Druses and Christians, and we are trying to solve in a small measure the problem which occupied the French in this country for some years, and required a large army to enforce it—viz, how to teach people to live together in peace, to respect each other's different religious points of view and to realize that religion is a life to be lived and not something about which to quarrel and fight and kill one another. I think we have largely succeeded in the school from that point of view, because year in and year out our children work together, eat together, sit next each other on the same benches in the school room, play together and sleep side by side, and yet no religious difficulties ever arise between them. Our ideals of peace and goodwill are being absorbed by these young people who have generations and generations of antagonism behind them, when people have periodically killed and even massacred one another wholesale, as in 1860 when the powers of Europe intervened and stationed troops in the country for a long time to keep the people from one another's throats. Outward and repressive measures can never reach the point; to get the best out of people we must believe that they are capable of the best and expect the best of them, and nearly always we find people respond to that expectation. During the very serious troubles of 1926 and 1927, when for some months the roads were unsafe by day and by night, when murderers and bandits were operating all the time, the fact that we refused to have or to carry a single weapon of defense of any kind was a great object lesson to most people, and our boys have often opened their eyes wide with surprise when I have told them the only enemy who can do me any harm is Daniel Oliver, and if we



Daniel Oliver



Emily Oliver

love people and believe in them, we shall have no fear in our hearts, because love and fear can rarely dwell together. Some may laugh at this as the doctrine of a simpleton and idealist. Let me say to any such that I have found it work in practice for nearly forty-eight years in Syria and therefore I have no desire to change it. Our boys are not only learning to live and work together and overcome differences of religion and all the background connected therewith, but they are also being taught how to govern themselves. We have, as it were, a small democratic Republic in the school and it is wonderful how well and on the whole, how smoothly it works. They get up by themselves at 4.30 in the morning and are in the study room by 5 o'clock, summer and winter alike, and study till 6.30. Breakfast is at 6.45 and school begins at 8 o'clock promptly. Before this, all sweeping is done, bedrooms tidied, dishes washed and put away—everything has to be finished before school begins. From 8 o'clock to 12.15, with fifteen minutes' recess at 10.15, school goes on; then there is an interval of an hour and a quarter for lunch. The children set their own tables, serve the lunch and again all dishes have to be washed and put away before school begins at 1.30, which goes on till 4 o'clock. From 4 o'clock to 6 o'clock is the time for play and organized sports or work, such as wood-cutting, gardening, carrying of water, etc. At 6 o'clock is the evening meal, and at 6.30 the children are again in the study room to 8.30, and all must be in bed by 9 o'clock. Of course, the very young children get up later and go to bed earlier. No teacher is ever with them in the study room during the hours of study—only one of themselves who acts as monitor.

We have one set of boys who make all the shoes for the boys and girls in the school. They make all the new shoes in the summer vacation and then repairs are done every week on Saturday—that saves us a great deal of money. Another set of boys do all the carpentering work in the school—in the summer holidays they make benches, tables, cupboards and all repairs to doors and windows, etc. Another set do the gardening work, others again do the painting, and others help with sewing and repairing clothes. Also, we have boys who are the barbers. No work is allowed to interfere with school work—it is all done, the bulk of it during the holidays, and the rest of it out of school hours; but every boy has certain duties. We believe thoroughly in the gospel of work and every boy and girl has to work in some line in addition to their studies.

We are on the spot always ready to step in if any difficulties arise, which the boys cannot handle, or in case of emergency, and it is no light matter to watch over the health of such a large community, with no medical help close at hand. We interfere as little as possible with the work of our little Republic and in many respects it is quite a model Republic. We hope in this way lessons of self-control, co-operation, bearing and forbearing, are being learned which will be very necessary in the wider life which lies ahead of them.

Graduates Start Work in Life

WE want the boys and girls who go out from here to be leaders of thought, to be teachers, or to occupy administrative or other important positions where in some measure they will help to form public opinion and share in reconstructing a new world of thought and ideas in the Near East. We have the satisfaction in knowing that already our aim is being realized. Some of our graduates were chosen by a high official of the Sudan Government to be trained in Khartoum for the special work of the Post Office and Telegraph Department which in the Sudan includes the savings bank. The Government expected they might require a year in Khartoum, to study the technical side of the work, before being appointed to different parts of the country. However, our boys surprised the Government by completing the work and passing successfully the examinations in six months instead of twelve. Later, another of our graduates was engaged by Sir Said Pasha Schcoir, the chief of the financial department of the Sudan Government and has, I understand, some hundreds of helpers in his department. I think of these young men as a small Quaker outpost in the heart of the dark continent. What is required of them there, apart from their official duties, will be to live the Christian life; and occupying posts of administrative importance in the small towns and villages scattered through the Sudan, they will have enormous opportunities for influencing people in the right direction, for living clean lives, being truthful, upright and honest—the things so absolutely essential in the life of a Government official in any part of the Near East or of Africa, where corruption is so frequent. I believe they will do a noble work.

A former day scholar, the son of one of our Syrian teachers, who worked his way through the American University in Bey-

routh was chosen out of some hundreds of students to be sent to the Chicago University, with a two years' scholarship to study Semitic languages and fit himself to occupy the chair which is to be established in the University of Beyrouth for Semitic languages. His brother is teaching in the American Mission High School in Sidon, where he has ample opportunity to pass on the Quaker point of view and to teach others what we believe to be the right way of life.

Still another of our graduates, who has taught for us here for two years doing fine work in the school, is going down in the autumn to the American University in Beyrouth. He is hoping to work his way by teaching backward students or waiting on the tables, or any honest work that will help him to get the higher education which he is so desirous to possess. He is a very bright lad—his average grade during the two last years of his High School course here was 92 and 94 respectively. Another graduate has also applied for admission to the University, and as he can do carpentering work, he is hoping to be able to work during the Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays at carpentering, so as to be able to pay for his tuition and board. That is the kind of stuff that our graduates are made of—they are ready to work every moment in order to get on with their studies and fit themselves for the higher positions in life.

Industrial Work

IN 1920 we began industrial work in order to help the women and girls. We believe in work and never, when we can help it, give money except for work done. We started the industry of carpet-making in 1919, which William Bacon Evans supervised after his arrival in 1920. This continued for four years. A great many young women were helped and learned how to make carpets—some are making them in their own houses now. However, it was impossible to continue this work as we could not sell the carpets even at cost price, in the United States of America. With the tens of thousands of Armenian refugees who fled from Cilicia, in 1922, to Syria, after the French handed back Cilicia to Turkey, so many thousands of rugs were thrown on the market for less than half their value, that it became unprofitable economically to make new rugs. I need not dwell here on our work for Armenian refugees for two years; some hundreds were helped, clothed and fed and doctored and enabled to get on their feet again.

On the closing of the carpet industry, we felt it was still necessary to help the Syrian young women to get some work in order to live. Emily Oliver started teaching them fine needlework and this industrial work has grown and expanded until it is self-supporting. From fifty to sixty young women are earning a good living in this way and turning out fine work. It means much labor for Emily Oliver and her helpers, the supervision and oversight of all this needlework, the giving out and taking in of work and paying the girls, but it is a wonderful boon for the young here to have this employment, otherwise many of them would be in great straits. Julia A. Carpenter, *58 West Broadway, Salem, New Jersey,* with Elizabeth Norris and other helpers, has been a wonderful help in managing and arranging for the sale of the needlework in the United States of America —indeed, she has not only given her time and services voluntarily, but has shown such good business capacity as to make a complete success of her end of the work. She has, indeed, been a blessing to the young women in Syria.

Peace Work in Palestine

IN 1930, following the Arab-Jew riots in Palestine, I decided to extend my activities for peace to that country and to use any influence I had in helping to promote a better understanding between the groups concerned. During the seven years that have elapsed since, I have been constantly back and forth to Palestine, interviewing Arab and Jewish leaders, representatives of the British Government, and others who command influence in the country, including newspaper editors, politicians, religious leaders, teachers, missionaries and business men, in an endeavor to solve what appears to be one of the most difficult political problems confronting the British Government and the League of Nations today.

In 1934, I went to London with a Minute from the Syria and Palestine Yearly Meeting for the purpose of laying before Friends in England the very serious conditions that existed in Palestine, and this I think I was successful in doing. While in England, I had the opportunity of conferring with the Colonial Secretary, under whose office the Mandate for Palestine is, and with other members of the Government, and with many men and women high in political and influential circles in England. I came away feeling that at least we had awakened further interest in this very difficult problem, and a strong committee



Soccer Team

of English Friends was formed for the purpose of keeping the public advised of the real conditions existing in Palestine.

I have been to Geneva, where I had the opportunity of appearing before the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations and presenting what I conceived to be the facts to its members. They received me most graciously and expressed their appreciation of our efforts in the most friendly and cordial terms, and urged that we continue our work and intensify it as far as possible.

My travels in connection with this concern have brought me in contact with Arab Kings and Princes, their great political leaders and head men, and powerful Bedouin sheiks, and my journeys to visit them and urge them along the path of peace have taken me across the desert to Baghdad, to Amaan in Transjordan, and down the Red Sea to Jedda, where I went to visit, at his invitation, His Majesty, The King of the Hejaz. I have visited rebel leaders in their strongholds by night, and have been taken to others whose activities were unknown to the Government and their opponents. During the days of the riots, I, accompanied only by my chauffeur, visited village after village in which death had stalked and where even troops and police dared not go except in numbers. Always, without exception, I have been received and treated with the greatest courtesy and affection, and the spirit of good will has been shown me by Briton, Arab and Jew alike. I feel that I have their confidence and their love, and I know they have mine.

It is, of course, impossible to estimate the value of the contribution one has made, but I feel confident that my activities, which you have so kindly backed, have had something to do with holding a very difficult situation in check.

You are, of course, aware of the report of the British Royal Commission and its recommendations to Parliament. Whether these recommendations are adopted or not, the necessity for promoting a better understanding between the Arabs and the Jews will remain for some years to come, and the only path to take is to go forward. This work must continue! And I will give all the time and energy I can to it.

In connection with this work of spreading good will, in the beginning of the year I began issuing a weekly newspaper in Arabic, "The Lighthouse of the East". The newspaper has been very well received and, while we have not yet a wide circulation, our paper does go into the right places. We have

found a willingness on the part of the leaders and influential people to give interviews and state opinions, and I am most thankful for all the help that they have given me.

Conclusion

THIS is a bare outline of what we are doing and attempting to do here, of the spirit in which we are doing it and the ideals we are setting before ourselves and our boys and girls. We believe it is the young people, such as we have here, who are going to rise up and reform the country. Notwithstanding the war and all its suffering, the serious disturbances arising out of the recent Druse rebellion in the Hauran, all the economic difficulties consequent on the partition of the country and the barriers raised by new boundaries, yet there is a real spirit of progress and there is no doubt that construction is now the main aim before all thinking people and especially before the minds of the young. The boys and girls of Syria feel that there is a bigger and wider life ahead of them and they are earnestly reaching out towards it. One is much encouraged by the ambitions of the young. Some of these ambitions are greater than they will probably be able to realize, yet we rejoice that they have them. With the young these ambitions are manifested in the overwhelming desire which is shown everywhere for better and higher education; with the older people in the desire for improved communications, better roads, new bridges, the bringing of water from distant places to towns that have little in order to plant and grow more vegetables, fruit-trees, etc., the movement for building better houses and improving the villages to attract still more summer visitors from Egypt and the plains of Syria to the Lebanon, which is really a second Switzerland—all these things, and many more, show that we have left the time of stagnation and that we are reaching out to better things. Syria is the meeting ground of so many nations, the key to the Near East and the Far East. As in the past, so in the present its geographical position gives it tremendous political importance and we want to use faithfully the advantages which this position gives so that this Quaker outpost on the slopes of the Lebanon, may be an effective witness to the teaching and spirit and life of Jesus Christ. We want to live his message here and it is our aim that the boys and girls who go out from the Daniel and Emily Oliver Orphanage, will be living epistles for Him in the higher positions

of life for which their education is fitting them, wielding the right influence and helping forward the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is a kingdom of love and righteousness, peace and goodwill.

I cannot close a statement of this kind without expressing how deeply grateful we feel for the love and sympathy and generous support of American Friends. A great many of these kind Friends have been connected with us for over thirty years and their love and interest have been unfailing. The old Castle here, and all the new buildings on the site, have been mostly provided by some of these generous Friends. Many of our boys and girls who passed through our schools in pre-war days, received the higher education through their help. These Friends themselves will never know how much they have encouraged us personally, by their friendship and support, and how much they have helped forward the work in Syria by their generosity. But I do want them to know how gratefully we appreciate all they have done, and are doing, and to them I would say now, as their Master will say later: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these * * * ye have done it unto me."

In 1922, my friend, B. Hubert Cooper, formed the American Board in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and kindly consented to accept the Chairmanship of it. This Board took the responsibility for financing and publicizing our work and they have been a tremendous strength to us. We are grateful for their help and for the comfort it is to us to know that they are behind us and the work, and that they are bearing the burden of the home end of this concern. I know it is not too much for me to ask you, the reader of this pamphlet, to help them with your contributions.

The object of this little pamphlet is to give information, which Friends have asked for, and not with any desire to praise our work or doings. We are very conscious of much shortcoming. Our Master is always far in the lead with His method, "inwardness"—with His secret "self-renouncement"—with His atmosphere, "sweet reasonableness," to use Mathew Arnold's inimitable characterization. But we follow "without haste and without rest," sure of our message and sure of ultimate success—

"*. . . Gazing beyond all perishable fears*
To some diviner goal
Beyond the waste of years."

DANIEL OLIVER.

The Daniel and Emily Oliver Orphanages
Ras-el-Metn, Syria

or

c/o Provident Trust Company
17th and Chestnut Streets
Philadelphia, Pa.

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2. *Please send me all reports referring to the work of the Olivers.*
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I give and bequeath to The Daniel and Emily Oliver Orphanages the sum of $
(or other personal property, describing the same).

II. Form of Devise of Real Estate

I give and devise to The Daniel and Emily Oliver Orphanages, their successors and assigns, all that
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